

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 COPENHAGEN 0400

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PGOV PFOR EFISH GL DA US

SUBJ: BACKGROUND FOR WASHINGTON VISIT BY GREENLAND

MINISTER HANSEN

REF: COPENHAGEN 0137, 0261 AND 0212 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS ON THE PRESENT STATUS OF GREENLAND AND ITS FUTURE MAY BE HELPFUL IN DISCUSSIONS WITH HANSEN. AFTER A LONG PERIOD OF ISOLATION AND THEN COMPLETE INTEGRATION WITH DENMARK, GREENLAND IS SLOWLY APPROACHING HOME RULE STATUS. IN THIS MESSAGE, WE DESCRIBE SOME OF THE PROBLEMS THE DANES FACE AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. INTERESTS. END SUMMARY.

1. THE DANISH GOVERNMENT APPEARS TO VIEW THE FEBRUARY 12-13 VISIT TO WASHINGTON BY GREENLAND MINISTER JORGEN PEDER HANSEN AS HAVING A TWOFOLD PURPOSE. SPECIFICALLY, HANSEN AND HIS GOVERNMENT WISH TO OBTAIN US CONCURRENCE IN AN INCREASE IN THE DANISH SALMON QUOTA PRESENTLY LIMITED TO 1190 TONS PER YEAR. SECONDLY, THE DANISH GOVERNMENT WISHES TO DEMONSTRATE TO THE GREENLANDERS THAT IT IS MAKING STRENUOUS EFFORTS IN THEIR
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BEHALF IN ORDER TO IMPROVE THEIR WELL-BEING WHICH HAS

BEEN ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY THE SALMON QUOTA AND BY DIMINISHED FISH CATCHES IN GENERAL.

2. BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE, HANSEN IS SCHEDULED TO RECEIVE BRIEFINGS AT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY CONCERNING THE LARGER FOREIGN POLICY ASPECTS OF DENMARK-GREENLAND MATTERS. WE HAVE BEEN ASKED BY THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, HOWEVER, TO CONVEY TO WASHINGTON THAT HANSEN'S VISIT THERE IS NOT THE APPROPRIATE OCCASION FOR A FULL-BLOWN DISCUSSION OF US-GREENLAND-DENMARK ISSUES.

3. WE BELIEVE THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S WISHES SHOULD LARGELY BE RESPECTED. ON THE OTHER HAND, CHANGE IS AFACT IN GREENLAND AND IT APPEARS TO US ALMOST INEVITABLE THAT THESE CHANGES AND WHAT THEY MAY PORTEND WILL COME UP DURING HANSEN'S TRIP. FOR THIS REASON, THE WASHINGTON AGENCIES MAY FIND THE FOLLOWING SURVEY OF CURRENT AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS IN GREENLAND OF INTEREST.

4) A GREENLAND HOME RULE COMMISSION WAS ESTABLISHED IN THE FALL OF 1975 WITH COPENHAGEN UNIVERSITY LAW PROFESSOR ISI FOIGHEL AS ITS CHAIRMAN. TWO MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION HAVE ALREADY BEEN HELD, ONE IN LATE NOVEMBER IN COPENHAGEN AND THE LAST IN GREENLAND AT SONDRE STROMFJORD ON JANUARY 20. THE NEXT MEETING HAS BEEN FIXED FOR APRIL 1976 IN COPENHAGEN. GENERALLY, THE DANES HOPE THAT THE ARRANGEMENT THAT HAS BEEN ALREADY WORKED OUT WITH THE FAROE ISLANDS COULD SERVE AS A MODEL. OVER TIME, THE DANISH GOVERNMENT PLANS TO GIVE THE GREENLANDERS CONTROL OVER MOST OF THEIR INTERNAL AFFAIRS WHILE THE METROPOLE WILL RETAIN RESPONSIBILITY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE. GREENLAND WOULD REMAIN UNDER THE DANISH CROWN.

5. THE FIRST AREAS TO BE TRANSFERRED WILL PROBABLY BE CONTROL OVER EDUCATION AND BROADCASTING. ONE RESULT OF THE JANUARY MEETING, HOWEVER, WAS THAT THE TARGET DATE FOR THE COMPLETION OF THE TRANSFER OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR EDUCATION WAS PUT BACK FROM EARLY 1978 TO EARLY 1979. THIS

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SLIPPAGE, WHICH WAS EXPLICITLY ACCEPTED BY EVEN THE YOUNGER, MORE RADICAL GREENLANDERS, WILL PROBABLY OCCUR IN OTHER AREAS. FURTHERMORE, UNTIL AND UNLESS THE PROCEEDS FROM GREENLAND'S MINERAL RESOURCES MATERIALIZE, THE GREENLANDERS WILL BE IN NO POSITION TO PICK UP THE TAB FOR THE ACTIVITIES THAT INTERNAL AUTONOMY IMPLIES. (THE COST TO THE METROPOLE TO KEEP GREENLAND RUNNING COMES TO ABOUT US \$100 MILLION A YEAR OR US\$2000

PER INHABITANT.)

6. A THUMBNAIL SKETCH OF DANISH-GREENLAND RELATIONS SINCE WORLD WAR II COULD BE DIVIDED INTO THREE PARTS. FIRST WAS THE PERIOD UNTIL 1953 WHEN THE DANES GOVERNED GREENLAND AS A COLONY ENTIRELY CLOSED TO INFLUENCE FROM THE OUTSIDE, INCLUDING DENMARK ITSELF.

7. WITH REFORM OF THE CONSTITUTION IN 1953, THE DANES PUSHED HARD TO INTEGRATE GREENLAND AS CLOSELY AS POSSIBLE WITH THE METROPOLE. IN DOING SO THEY SPENT LARGE SUMS TO BUILD HOUSING, COMMUNICATIONS, HOSPITALS, AND SCHOOLS, AT THE SAME TIME CENTRALIZING MOST OF THE ISLANDERS IN ABOUT SIX OR EIGHT MAJOR VILLAGES. AT FIRST, THIS SEEMED TO WORK BUT THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE WELL-PAID, TAX-EXEMPT DANISH WORKERS AND THE GREENLANDERS BECAME MORE PRONOUNCED THAN EVER, AND EVENTUALLY IT BECAME CLEAR TO THE DANISH GOVERNMENT THAT COMPLETE INTEGRATION WAS NOT THE ANSWER. ADDED TO THIS WAS THE FACT THAT EVEN THE MOST MINUTE DECISIONS WERE MADE IN COPENHAGEN.

8. SINCE 1973, THE POLICY HAS CHANGED AGAIN, AS DENMARK TRIES TO ENCOURAGE THE GREENLAND MUNICIPAL COUNCILS AS WELL AS THE ISLAND'S PROVINCIAL COUNCIL TO TAKE ON MORE RESPONSIBILITY.

9. THERE WOULD APPEAR TO BE THREE AREAS OF MAJOR US INTEREST AND CONCERN AS THE FUTURE UNFOLDS IN GREENLAND:

- THE CONSTITUTIONAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GREENLAND AND DENMARK;

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- THE STATUS OF US BASES AT THULE AND SONDRERSTROM;

AND

- THE EXPLOITATION OF GREENLAND'S NATURAL RESOURCES. FROM TODAY'S PERSPECTIVE, THE CHANCES ARE GOOD THAT THE DANES WILL ATTAIN WHAT THEY HAVE SET OUT TO DO; THAT IS, ESTABLISH SOME FORM OF LOCAL AUTONOMY OR HOME RULE AND PRESERVE THE CONSTITUTIONAL LINK WITH DENMARK.

10. LAST NOVEMBER, DURING HIS VISIT TO WASHINGTON, WE UNDERSTAND THAT PCIME MINISTER ANKER JORGENSEN GAVE ASSURANCES THAT THE CONTINUED PRESENCE OF US BASES IN GREENLAND WOULD NOT BE AFFECTED BY HOME RULE. WE WOULD AGREE GENERALLY WITH THIS ASSESSMENT AT LEAST OVER THE NEXT

FIVE YEARS. THE DANISH GOVERNMENT AND MILITARY
TAKE EVERY OCCASION TO MAKE IT ABUNDANTLY CLEAR TO US
THAT THEY WISH THE US PRESENCE TO CONTINUE IN GREENLAND.
WHILE IT IS OBVIOUS THAT SOME OF THE YOUNG
GREENLANDERS DO NOT CONCUR WITH THIS WISH, WE SEE NO
PRESENT EVIDENCE THAT THE STATUS OF THESE BASES WILL BE
ONE OF THEIR EARLY PREOCCUPATIONS.

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11. PERHAPS THE THORNIEST AREA OF CONTENTION BETWEEN
THE DANISH GOVERNMENT AND THE GREENLANDERS IS
CONTROL OVER THE ALLOCATION OF THE PROCEEDS OF WHAT
APPEAR TO BE CONSIDERABLE MINERAL RESOURCES IN
GREENLAND. AFTER LONG NEGOTIATIONS, A NUMBER OF OFF-
SHORE OIL EXPLORATION CONCESSIONS, WITH MAJOR US
PARTICIPATION, WERE ALLOCATED LAST YEAR AND ACTUAL
DRILLING, ON A VERY MODEST SCALE, WILL BEGIN THIS YEAR
OFF THE WEST SHORE OF GREENLAND. THERE IS EVERY
INDICATION THAT SUBSTANTIAL OIL DEPOSITS EXIST IN THE
CONCESSION AREAS.

12. GREENLAND IS A SENSITIVE SUBJECT HERE AND
ASPERSIONS OF COLONIZATION WHICH ARE OCCASIONALLY
THROWN AT THE DANES EVEN IN JEST ARE RESENTED. THE
DANES FEEL EMOTIONALLY, AND PATERNALISTICALLY TIED TO GREENLAND,

AND THEY ARE WILLING TO SPEND HEAVILY TO DO WHAT THEY
CONSIDER IS RIGHT AND HUMANE BY THE GREENLANDERS IN ORDER TO
GIVE THEM PROPER SOCIAL BENEFITS. NEVERTHELESS,
OFFICIALS HERE CONTINUE TO SEE GREENLAND AS BELONGING
TO THE DANISH CROWN, AND THEY ARE EVEN TOUCHY ABOUT
THE WORDS "HOME RULE" AND "AUTONOMY", LET ALONE
"INDEPENDENCE".

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13. THE DANISH HOPE THAT THE FAROES CAN SERVE AS A
MODEL IS, HOWEVER, NOT ENTIRELY REALISTIC. THE
FAROESE ARE EUROPEAN WITH A LONG TRADITION OF SELF-
SUFFICIENCY. THEIR STANDARD OF LIVING IS NO WORSE
THAN IN MANY PARTS OF THE CONTINENT. ON THE OTHER HAND,
TODAY'S TYPICAL GREENLANDER IS OF MIXED ESKIMO-DANISH
BLOOD, HAS ONLY LIMITED EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE IN
RUNNING HIS OWN AFFAIRS AND EKES OUT AN UNENVIABLE
EXISTENCE.

14. GIVEN ALL THESE FACTORS, THEREFORE, OUR CONCLUSION
IS THAT AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING, THE US SHOULD
REMAIN IN THE BACKGROUND. WE SHOULD, HOWEVER, BE ALERT
TO OPPORTUNITIES TO ENCOURAGE THE DANES TO ACCOMPLISH
THIS TRANSITION SMOOTHLY BY MEETING WHAT THE ISLANDERS PERCEIVE TO
BE THEIR "LEGITIMATE ASPIRATIONS". FOR, IF THESE
ASPIRATIONS ARE FRUSTRATED, THERE WOULD BE SHARP SHIFT
TO THE LEFT. THEREFORE, WHEN CONSIDERING SEPARATE
ASPECTS OF THE ISLANDS'S PROBLEMS (E.G., THE SALMON QUOTA),
WE MUST KEEP IN MIND OUR MAJOR OBJECTIVE - TO PRESERVE US
AND WESTERN STRATEGIC AND ECONOMIC INTERESTS IN
GREENLAND.
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